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U.S. Department of the Interior

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Jewel Cave and Wind Cave Celebrate Founders Day With Free Cave Tours

Custer, SD – This year marks the 97th anniversary of the National Park Service, and Jewel Cave National Monument and Wind Cave National Park will join the other 401 units of the agency in celebration on Sunday, August 25th. Each year the National Park Service celebrates its birthday, and everyone is invited to explore and discover these beautiful resources across the country. In honor of the special date, both Jewel Cave and Wind Cave are offering free cave tours on Sunday.

“Birthdays are a time to celebrate, and we want everyone to join in the fee-free festivities,” said Jewel Cave Superintendent Larry Johnson. “National parks belong to all Americans and offer something for everyone. So visit our public lands by wandering a trail, photographing the scenery, or venturing into a cave through a guided tour.”

At Jewel Cave, three different cave tours are available: Discovery, Scenic, and Historic Lantern Tours. Each tour is offered at multiple times throughout the day and exposes visitors to different interpretive experiences and lengths of time underground. Interested visitors are encouraged to contact the Monument in advance for further information and planning assistance. The visitor center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The Wind Cave National Park visitor center is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. with the first tour beginning at 9:20 a.m. and the last tour leaving at 5 p.m. Free tours of the Natural Entrance will be given throughout the day, approximately every 20 to 30 minutes. Visitors will experience one of the most complex caves in the world and view the rare cave formation called boxwork. This tour involves 300 stairs, most of which go down and is considered moderately strenuous.

Cave temperatures at both caves are around 50 degrees. A light coat or sweater and sturdy walking shoes are recommended. All tours and activities begin at the respective visitor centers, and cave tour tickets will be issued on a first come, first served basis. Tours can be extremely popular resulting in long wait times, and they could possibly sell out before the end of the day.

With the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, the United States was the first country to set aside its most significant places as national parks so that they could be enjoyed by all. When President Woodrow Wilson signed legislation that created the National Park Service on Aug. 25, 1916, there were only 37 national parks.

Today, the National Park Service cares for 401 park sites throughout the country – each one an important part of our collective identity. Some parks commemorate notable people and achievements, others conserve magnificent landscapes and natural wonders, and all provide a place to have fun and learn something new. Plan your visit at www.nps.gov/findapark.

Over

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

For more information, contact Jewel Cave at (605) 673-8300 or www.nps.gov/jeca; contact Wind Cave at (605) 745-4600 or www.nps.gov/wica.



The bacon drapery at Jewel Cave is one of the most prominent cave features witnessed by visitors on the Scenic Tour. NPS Photo

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About the National Park Service. More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 401 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Learn more at www.nps.gov.

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